

A-Level Government and Politics



What is Politics A-level about?

The first component introduces students to the key concepts of **Democracy** in the UK. Politicians have huge power over us but how much power do we have over politicians? People have power mainly through **elections** in which they vote for their favoured party and/or set of policies. But is the electoral process democratic? And what do these **Political Parties** stand for? Do their views change over time? Are they themselves democratic? Alternatively people can join **pressure groups**, in an attempt to influence government policy perhaps by demonstrating or even taking direct action. But is this democratic or a form of minority rule? How far does the **media** influence government decisions? Unit one will help girls understand how such processes work and they will start to judge for themselves whether or not the UK is sufficiently democratic.

Students will also study three core political ideas which have been a traditional element of UK Politics. **Conservatism, Liberalism and Socialism** will be studied in relation to how the core principles of the three ideologies affect human nature, the state, society and the economy. Girls will also discover the divisions within these ideologies and who the principal thinkers are within each school of thought.

The second component introduces students to the major governmental processes within the UK. It encourages them to develop a critical understanding of the role and effectiveness of key institutions and the relationship amongst them in the context of multilevel governance. What is the role of the **Prime Minister** and how does this relate to the **Cabinet**? How much power do MPs have and what is their function within **Parliament**? What role does our **Judiciary** play in this and how does all of this fit in with our un-codified **Constitution**? Ultimately, where does power lie?

In addition, students will be looking at one political idea from a choice of five; **Anarchism, Ecologism, Feminism, Multiculturalism and Nationalism**. Whichever strand is chosen by the department, students will follow a similar structure to the political ideas in component one with the core ideas and principles, the effect of these ideas, divisions with the ideas and key political thinkers being studied.

The third component allows students to study US Politics and the considerable effect it has on the UK, European and world affairs. The course encourages students to explore the **US Constitution** and the arguments surrounding this guiding document of US politics. In learning about the key instruments of government in the US, **Congress** and the **Presidency**, Students will be able to analyse the manner in which power is achieved and exercised over their citizens. The **Supreme Court's** role in interpreting the US Constitution and upholding individual and **Civil Rights** is an increasingly crucial one. Students will be expected to highlight the debates surrounding **Democracy and Participation** in the US. The course expects a comparing and contrasting of politics and institutions in the US and the UK. This will develop a wider understanding of politics as a discipline, underpinned by the theoretical concepts of comparative politics.

One of the defining characteristics of the subject is that it is dynamic and contemporary. Students will learn to understand the political system by studying developments as they happen. They will be expected to keep up to date with current UK political issues and we strongly encourage them to read a newspaper, watch Political TV programmes and follow us on twitter! [@SGGSPoliticsDep](https://twitter.com/SGGSPoliticsDep).

How is Politics taught at Shoterly?

The course is not simply based on argument and opinion, although there will be plenty of that. It requires students to learn a body of knowledge. Each topic has a list of subsections and within that students will be required to learn key facts. As a contemporary subject, the study of Politics requires students to develop an awareness of Politics via the media. As the course progresses there is plenty of scope for discussion and debate and students will learn how to develop reasoned argument and

consider different viewpoints. There is also, as with all social science subjects, a requirement to develop writing skills. Time will be devoted to this in lessons, starting from the very basics. This will show students how they can write more effectively and give them time to practise in short controlled exercises, giving individual feedback.

What might the subject lead onto?

The subject will develop your critical and analytical thinking, note taking, research, oral and presentational skills and writing abilities and as such is very well respected by Universities as a rigorous subject. It is useful if you wish to study History or any social science, such as Economics, Business, Law, Journalism and, of course Politics, International Relations and PPE. Several of our students have gone on to study similar courses at Oxford, Cambridge and The LSE. However the knowledge and skills which the study of Politics will give you will be welcomed by any employer. Do not just consider the utility of the subject, you may simply be interested in learning about Politics and attracted by a new challenge.

Where have our Politics students ended up?

Many of our A-Level Politics students go on to study Politics at University sometimes in conjunction with other subjects, below is a list of universities and courses that our most recent students have enrolled for.

Sheffield University – Politics and International Relations
University of Kent – Politics and International Relations
Bath University – Politics and International Relations;
Royal Holloway – History and Politics
Leeds University – Philosophy and Politics
The New College of the Humanities – PPE
Queen’s University Belfast – Politics and International Relations
York University – PPE

Enrichment opportunities

Students will have access to the pre-chewed politics website which has a wealth of political articles, a virtual textbook and advice on how to gain the best possible mark.

As well as running a debating society we try to enrich our students’ learning with trips and speakers...

Speakers over the last few years have included:-

George Galloway MP	Natalie Bennett (Former leader of the Green Party)
Nadhim Zahawi MP	Shami Chakrabarti
Amnesty International	Various lecturers from local Universities
Isabel Hardman (The Spectator)	discussing a range of political ideas
Lord Dear	

Trips for 2018/19

Parliament / Supreme Court visit October 2020



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